

## The Gurnet - Part VIII

By HERBERT BOARDMAN

(Written in 1935)

The Hiltons from Dorchester were there again, but I did not enjoy Frank Hilton's company as I had the previous summer. He had become sophisticated and rather a "Smart Aleck." Whenever I tried to play with him, he became bossy and seemed patronizing. However, he was very chummy with Dorothea Wentworth and they gave a candy sale, marshmallow fair and lemonade bazaar in the pavilion in aid of the Boston Floating Hospital. I was not allowed to have any part in this affair, except to drink a glass of lemonade. So I was downright peeved. It is all so funny to look back on now. It was, of course, my fault that I allowed them to rob me of my pleasure. Frank Hilton was a good boy and I should have been more tolerant about the situation. I wonder what ever became of him.

Frank and I were both very much attached to Mr. Charles W. Dill who came down again that summer. He was the sort of young man to whom children were instinctively drawn. Mark Price also came a second time.

The Fitzs, the Jensen girls, Edna Shepard and Anna Lewis again returned.

Mr. and Mrs. William R. Jacobs appeared for the first time as a happy wedded couple, accompanied by Miss Nellie Jacobs. I became enamoured of the Jacob's Boston terrier, "Regal" and had my picture taken with him on Plymouth Rock. This poor dog came off second best in an encounter with one of the Gurnet's many skunks. He hung his head in shame for several days. The worst pests of the Gurnet are skunks, rats, mosquitoes and spiders. There are several varieties of spiders present including some huge nauseating black ones with gigantic yellow spots on their backs. I once saw my great-aunt, Miss Martha Whitehead, clamp her hand right on one of these creatures which was on the rail of the stairs leading to the beach. Why she did not drop dead immediately I don't know. She probably never knew the spider was there.

1901. Amy Randall, a neighbor of the Boardmans on Hunt St., Watertown, was a guest for the first time.

There was a new head farmer, Alonzo Rich.

There were 2 steamboats plying between Boston and Plymouth that season, the "Shoe City" and "John Endicott." The former was a snappy little craft, resembling a miniature ocean liner and had a propeller. The old side-wheeler was a huge joke. It was none other than the old "Stamford" on which Uly Lee used to fascinate the passengers with his "ivory tickling" back in the 80's. The name had been changed to conceal the age of the boat and the absence of former glory. Nearly every day she broke down. Occasionally the 2 boats would come along together but more often the "John Endicott" would come crawling along, hours late, just as the "Shoe City" was about to start on the return trip.

Why the "John Endicott" did not go the bottom, with all on board, was a mystery. In the autumn, she ran in between Minot's Light and the mainland and struck the rocks; after being put into commission

again, she finally sank somewhere out in the bay. There were no passengers aboard.

Learning no lesson from the year before, we endured another hectic trip home on Labor Day.

1902. The summer of 1902 brought its changes. William Upham, on finding an old boat rudder in the woodshed one day, painted the inscription "Ye Gurnet Inn, 1752" on it. The date was acquired by guesswork. This sign was placed on the house and so the Gurnet House became the Gurnet Inn. Mr. Boardman's niece, Ida Gove Kidney and Amy Randall, fiancée of Fayette Boardman, assisted the Boardmans that year.

A young lad with only a thumb on his left hand came to work on the farm. His name was Albert Robinson but he was immediately nicknamed "Lanky Bob."

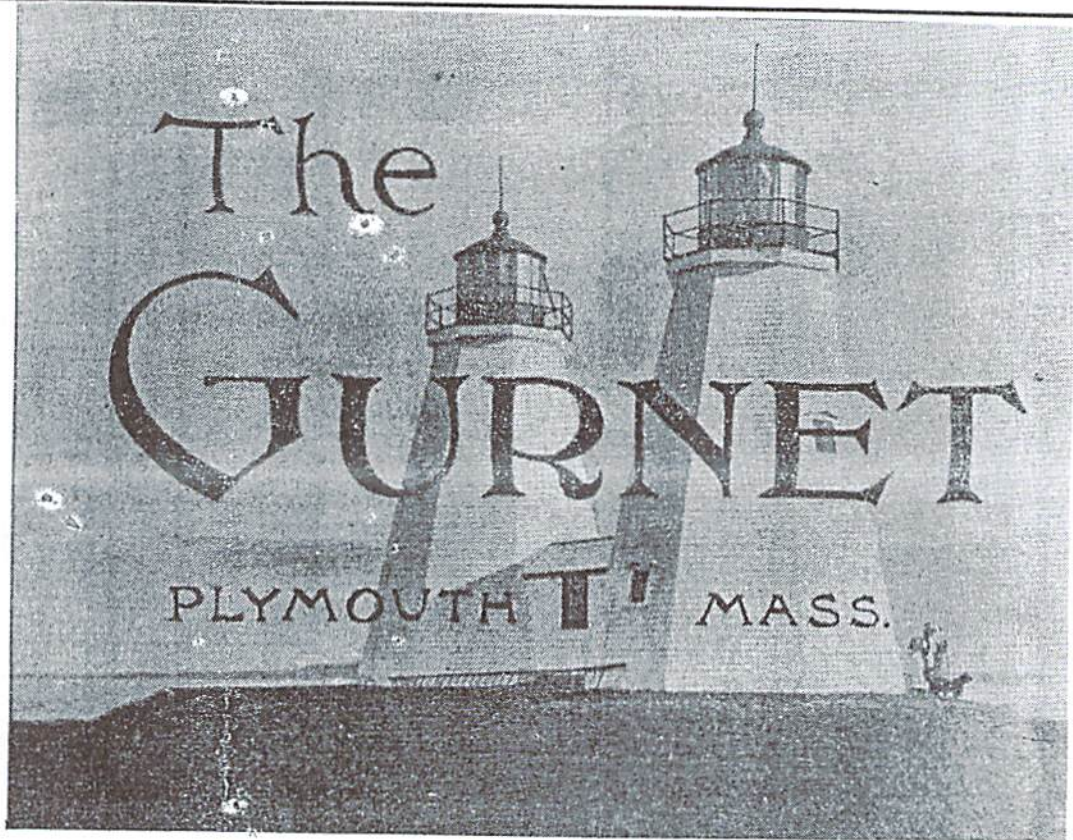
Mr. and Mrs. John Albert Holmes of Somerville came for a weekend in August. Mrs. Holmes had not been a visitor since 1888 when she had come as Mary Murdock. While riding from the railroad station, their carriage broke down, one wheel came off, causing Mrs. Holmes to step gracefully into the street, right in front of the cable office.

The family of Henry L. Sawyer of Somerville made 2 visits in 1902. Their son, Spencer Sawyer, was my most intimate playmate in Somerville, so the day of his arrival, when we met them at the train, was as near the Millennium as I expected to reach on earth.

The family of George Page of Cambridge, Mr. and Mrs. Jacobs, Mrs. Alonzo Bond and son, Alonzo, of Jamaica Plain, Miss Ada Jensen, Miss Joanna Zaugg of the Boston Public Library, Miss Mary Kennedy, a buyer in Stearns and Mr. and Mrs. W.H. Upham were 1902 guests. William Upham and Bertha Jensen had been married in June, so appeared as bride and groom.

Charles W. Dill came for the 3rd time and brought Miss Bessie Wall of Stoneham, with her aunt Mrs. A.R. Gree as chaperone. Their names were inscribed on the walls of the pavilion with the other Gurnetites of all seasons. Miss Wall had red hair and one day they all began to laugh when the similarity of the color of the tomato soup being served and Miss





Old cottages.

Wall's hair was noticed.

The summer of 1902 was a busy one, with a full house of boarders consuming vast quantities of lobster, clams and fresh-caught fish and enjoying the natural attractions.

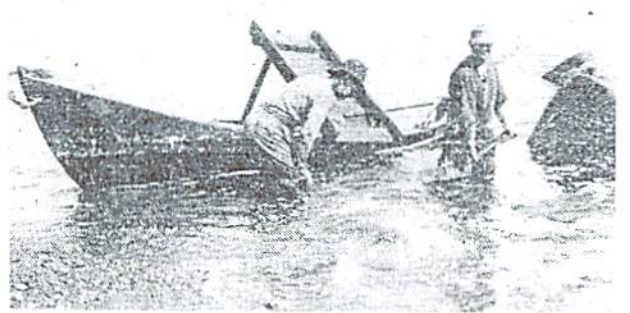
Up on the hill, things were quieter. The retired Captain Holmes was now a confirmed invalid, sitting in his cottage, watching the young people in their daily activities.

As a boy of 10, I often went in and talked with the dear old gentleman, who had been for so many years an important Gurnet figure. One day in the autumn, he was able to walk to the boat and embark on what was his last trip away from the Gurnet. On October 18, 1902, John Flavel Holmes quietly passed away in Plymouth. The young lady who had nursed him through the summer, Miss May McLeod, soon after married Arthur Payne, his grandson. Albert F. Holm married Miss Edith Hickey who had been at the Gurnet that summer.

In these early years of the present century, one of the most colorful personalities of the younger men was Arthur Payne. He was adventuresome and daring and caused many a sensation by his experiences in his own boat. Many a night he was caught out in the bay in storms and would be thought to be lost. But he always emerged victoriously. This naturally gave his mother, Mrs. Watson, many anxious moments. His picturesque and daring mode of life arose great admiration in me. I hardly ever dared speak to him and he seldom appeared to notice us children. It was my good fortune to visit him in 1922 at Baker's Island, off Salem where he was

lighthouse keeper, and received a royal welcome. At one period of his life he went on a whaling cruise, in 1908. He was to my sense the most dramatic and dashing of all Gurnet characters around 1900.

The Boardmans spent Thanksgiving 1902 at the Gurnet and nearly all the following winter, with Lanky Bob helping. When we were suffering in the city from the effects of a coal strike, they were kept warm by coal washed ashore from a grounded coal barge.



Gravel boats from Boston taking gravel off beach.

1903. This year the Inn was run by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Finney. Mr. Boardman was giving his undivided attention to a milk farm he had just purchased in Raynham and Mrs. Boardman was oc-



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cupied in the city. The Finneys were assisted by Alonzo Rich and Mrs. May Carr Wyatt and later her sister, Miss Florence Carr. George Powers of MIT with his wife and daughter spent much of the summer at the inn. Mrs. Gray and daughter, Clara Louise (or Lulu) came down again occasionally, joined by El Gray. Though they stopped at their own little cottage, they took some of their meals at the inn. The Fitzes and Uphams came again. The Giffords of Medford and Duxbury were sojourning on the point and also took some of their meals at the inn.

My father, Will Upham and Florence Gifford made several attempts to play golf, but as much of the time was spent searching for balls down in the marsh, the venture was finally given up as impractical. The Gurnet seems to be a hard place in which to introduce innovations; it appears to want its lovers to spend their time in the same old way year after year, and does not offer any assistance to people seeking new diversions.

I spent much time there with my aunt in 1903. I recall that in August my mother was anxious to return to the city and an easterly storm was raging. Captain Holmes had once told my mother that those storms sometimes lasted several days, so we braved the storm and Henry Finney drove my family, the Uphams and myself up the beach. It rained hard all the way and when we reached the station, Mrs. Upham's face was brightly colored from the dye in a veil she had worn. We caught the last train and had a gloomy ride to Boston.

However, we returned the following week and I stayed until my aunt closed the house in September. We went home by way of Kingston, where we stopped for a short visit.

I often enjoyed a trip to Plymouth in a power boat or in the Coast Guard boat. I found much to interest me and literally soaked myself in Pilgrim lore. I spent much of my time on Burial Hill, at Pilgrim Hall or in Burbank's book store. I also found time to enjoy the famous ice cream sodas at Cooper's Drug Store, at the head of North St. on Court St. Plymouth was quite a bustling little town even then, and trolley cars from Brockton ran through the streets.

The train service was excellent between Boston and Duxbury. It was said that the South Shore and Cape Cod branches were the most active lines on the entire New Haven system in the summer at this period, rivaling even the main line to New York. Every train on the South Shore line was usually packed and often consisted of 8 or 9 cars, sometimes as many as 12 on the weekend. There were 8 trains daily from Boston, 3 in the morning and 5 in the afternoon; going to Boston there were 5 morning and 3 afternoon trains. The 5:03 pm from Boston was the Lawson Flyer and ran express to Egypt where one rode through "Dreamworld," the rose-embowered estate of Thomas Lawson, the well known financier. This flyer left Duxbury for Boston at 7:49 am, running express from Egypt and arriving in Boston shortly before 9. On Saturdays the 1:10 train would be composed of from 12 to 15 cars and, standing at the station in Duxbury, would disappear around the curve toward Green Harbor. Saturday and Sunday evenings there were trains to Boston and on Sunday 5 trains each way. Most of the trains were accom-



Duxbury Clipper, Thursday, July 9, 1981

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modation trains from Braintree, but a few ran express to Hingham and between that town and Cohasset. At this time, the road was electrified between Braintree and Cohasset, which necessitated changing locomotives. But expresses ran by steam over the entire route. The electrification was soon abandoned.

In the old days there was a brick depot, combined with a restaurant and hotel, called Old Colony House, located where Nantasket Junction is now. This was a relic of the Old Colony Railroad which was absorbed by the New York, New Haven and Hartford. The Nantasket line was electrified and the changing point given its present name and wooden station. This South Shore line was built in 1871. Daniel Webster, in his day, had to drive from Marshfield to Kingston to take the train on the main line.

I used to derive a great thrill from my train journeys to and from Duxbury, I thought the Pilgrim country, including the Gurnet, the next thing to Paradise and the trains that bore me to and from this magic land were enshrined in a halo of romance. My heart would beat faster at the sight of the little house on the hill at Millbrook; and when the train would leave for home again a pang of sorrow would grip me as we wound gradually around the curve out of Duxbury. I was intensely thrilled when meeting the trains, especially when someone I wanted to see was coming. I spent many an hour at the little station, the very sight of which thrilled me. The distant whistling of the train and the vibrating rails brought music to my ears. The railroad has always appealed to my dramatic sense and I think that nothing has done more to take the fun out of life for me than the

disappearance of these smaller railroad lines.

There was a veritable riot of life and color at the country stations at train time, in those early days of the present century. How well I remember the names -- North Scituate, Greenbush, Marshfield Hills, Marshfield Centre! At Marshfield there was a gay crowd from Ocean Bluff and Brant Rock and even the funny little station at Green Harbor (apparently so far from civilization) had its merry crowd. What wonderful places Brant Rock and Green Harbor must be! -- just like Revere Beach I thought with my childish enthusiasm based wholly on fancy.

Now the romance of train time is gone, the few trains are practically deserted. There was a certain beauty and fascinating, colorful atmosphere furnished by the drama of American social life in the days when the railroad was at its height of popularity. This has gone, never to come again, with the evolution of motor vehicles and airplanes.

In these Gurnet reminiscences, I must not neglect to mention the musical evenings at the Willoughby cottage about 1903-04, when it was occupied by Miss Thomas. Sue Thomas was always getting up lively pastimes and this cottage with a piano in its spacious living room, was an excellent rendezvous. The entire company would sing well known songs, and dear Mrs. Dunham, mother-in-law of Capt. Rogers, always wanted the song "Where is My Wandering Boy Tonight" as she had a son who was more or less of a wanderer. They always tried to impress the Coast Guard men by singing such religious songs as "Throw Out the Life Line." This always amused me as I felt sure the Coast Guard men would much rather have heard the popular songs of the day.

Late in the year 1903, Capt. Higgins succeeded Capt. Eisner as keeper of the light.

